Skeena Region

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

March 2003

for Bear Glacier Provincial Park

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship Division

Bear Glacier Provincial Park Approvals Page

Forward

This management direction statement for Bear Glacier Provincial Park provides management direction until it is revised. Ongoing consultation between the Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement. Aboriginal rights are honoured and respected within the park.

Implementation of the strategies identified in the MDS will be dependent on available funding and Environmental Stewardship Division priorities.

Approvals:

Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division

Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

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Bear Glacier Provincial Park

Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and direction statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of strategies is subject to funding and funding procedures. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the park is subject to the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

On April 13, 2000, following the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, Royal Assent was provided to the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Act 2000*, c.7 effectively enacting the Nisga'a Final Agreement. Federal legislation followed ratification by the Nisga'a Nation in November 1998 and provincial legislation entitled the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Act* which received Royal Assent on April 26, 1999.

With the enactment of the Nisga'a Final Agreement on April 13, 2000, Bear Glacier Provincial Park was established as a Class "A" provincial park in accordance with Chapter 3 (Lands) of the final agreement. Bear Glacier Provincial Park was named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act* in June 2000. The designation and the park boundaries are required to be continued according to the terms of the Nisga'a Final Agreement. The Nisga'a Final Agreement is a treaty and a land claims agreement within the meaning of sections 25 and 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Consequently, the designation of Bear Glacier Provincial Park may not be modified without an amendment to the treaty itself.

Bear Glacier Provincial Park holds a special place in British Columbia history as a result of its enactment through the Nisga'a Final Agreement. The agreement is British Columbia's first treaty since 1899 and the fourteenth modern day treaty in Canada. Bear Glacier itself is one of British Columbia's scenic natural treasures and a well known feature visited by travellers on the Highway 37 corridor.

Bear Glacier Provincial Park is located part way between Meziadin Junction and Stewart. The 542 hectare park provides visitors the opportunity to view the only glacier beside a paved highway in British Columbia. Scenic roadside views of the glacier are available at a roadside rest/picnic area located within Bear Glacier Provincial Park. It is only in the latter half of the twentieth century that the glacier retreated enough to open up the pass. The Parks and Wilderness for the 90s process identified this area for protection.

Provincial Park Attributes

Conservation

- Protects a small area of both the very poorly represented Meziadin Mountains and poorly represented Southern Boundary Ranges ecosections. Currently only 0.5% of the Meziadin Mountains Ecosection is included the protected areas system. Bear Glacier Provincial Park is one of only two protected areas in this ecosection, contributing 22.4% of the overall protected area representation of this ecosection. Gingietl Creek Ecological Reserve contributes the remaining 77.6% of the protected area representation of this ecosection. Currently 2.11% of the Southern Boundary Ranges Ecosection is included in the protected areas system. Bear Glacier Provincial Park is one of only four protected areas in this ecosection, but the park makes only a minimal contribution (0.51%) to the overall protected area representation of this ecosection.
- Protects approximately 332 hectares of the ESSFwv variant. This variant is under-represented in the protected areas system (4.85%). The park contributes minimally (0.38%) to the overall protected areas system representation of the ESSFwv. The park also contributes approximately 203 hectares to the very well represented ATunp.
- Includes a portion of Bear Glacier which is a part of the Cambria Icefield.
- Contains Strohn Lake, a glacial outwash lake at the toe of the glacier.

Recreation and Tourism

- Presents British Columbia's only glacier accessible from a paved road.
- Provides a rest and picnic area with a view of Bear Glacier.

Commercial Business Opportunities

- Provides commercial business opportunities for guided interpretation and education automobile tour groups based on the special features of this park. This type of business is best developed as part of a systems approach where several provincial parks, protected areas and Crown land areas along Highway 37 are included to give clients a diverse and interesting program.
- Presents opportunities for the making of feature films and advertising videos because of the park's location close to roads and the area's spectacular scenery.

Cultural Heritage

- Park established through the Nisga'a Final Agreement.
- Subject to consultation in respect of planning and management with the Nisga'a Nation.
- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs claim land adjacent to or in portions of the park.
- Other cultural heritage attributes unknown.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Provides protection of nearly 25% of the Meziadin Mountains Ecosection in the protected areas system; one of only two protected areas providing representation of this ecosection.
- Protects a glacial lake and portion of Bear Glacier.
- Achieves tourism and travel route recreation goal for provincial parks.
- Provides only paved roadside access to a glacier in British Columbia.

Click here for Figure 1: Regional Context Map - 1,460 kb pdf

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Bear Glacier Provincial Park is located on Highway 37A and is 25 kilometres west of Meziadin Junction and 40 kilometres east of Stewart. Meziadin Junction itself is on Highway 37. The park is situated 156 kilometres north of the junction with Highway 16 at Kitwanga.

East of Bear Glacier, a short access road leads to a rest/picnic area. Directly in front of Bear Glacier and Strohn Lake is another highway pullout.

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

- None known.

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- Hwy 37A forms the park's northern boundary.
- Part of Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection's Wildlife Management Unit 6-16.
- Four picnic tables (concrete base with wooden planks for seats and top).
- Two garbage containers (green 45 gallon drums).
- One pit toilet (concrete style).

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- 25 Mile South Pit – a Ministry of Transportation gravel pit is excepted from Bear Glacier Provincial Park (covers 6.6 hectares).
- District lots surround Bear Glacier Provincial Park.

First Nations Interests

- The Nisga'a are interested in ensuring that the Nisga'a Final Agreement is respected and that Bear Glacier is and continues to be designated a Class "A" provincial park.
- That the Nisga'a Nation is consulted about planning and management of this park and other parks within the Nass area as identified in the Nisga'a Final Agreement (Chapter 3, paragraph 119).
- The Nisga'a Nation has expressed an interest in having consultation for Bear Glacier Provincial Park occur through the auspices of the Joint Park Committee established for Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park and Gingietl Creek Ecological Reserve. The committee would in effect become the address and contact for communication required in paragraph 68 of the general provisions of the Nisga'a Final Agreement.
- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs claim land adjacent to or in portions of the park and have an interest in being consulted on matters pertaining to the park.
- Aboriginal rights are honoured and protected within the park.

Other Agency Interests

- Ministry of Forests has an interest in the planning and harvesting of adjacent forest.
- Ministry of Energy and Mines is interested in facilitating nearby mineral exploration and activity.

- Ministry of Transportation has an interest in adjacent Highway 37A and in the 25 Mile South Pit excepted from but physically located in the park.

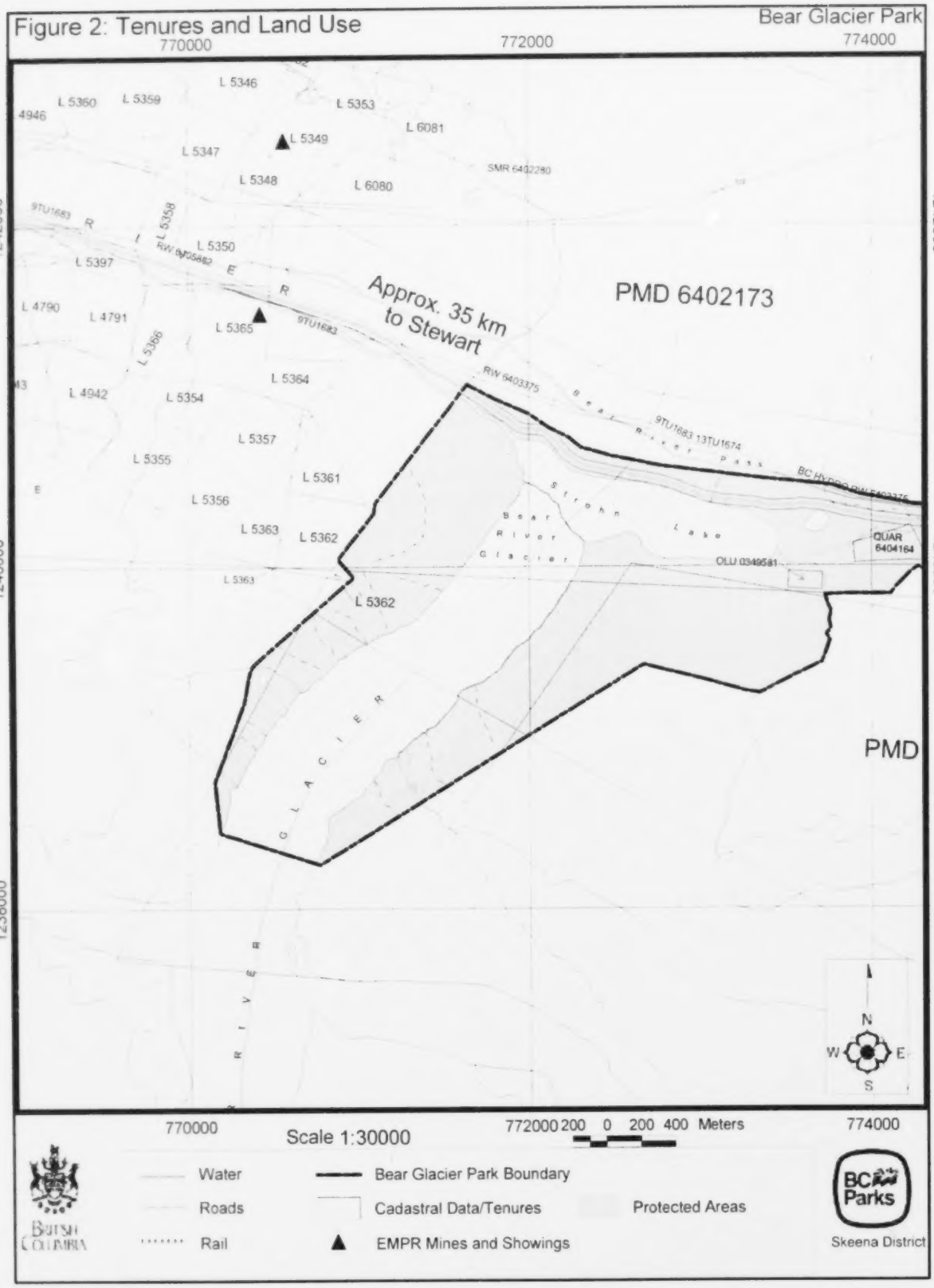


Figure 2: Tenures and Land Use
Bear Glacier Park
770000
772000
774000
1242000
1240000
1238000
L 5346
L 5360
L 5359
L 5353
4946
L 6081
L 5349
L 5347
SMR 6402280
L 5348
L 6080
9TU1683
L 5358
L 5350
RW 6405682
L 5397
Approx. 35 km
to Stewart
PMD 6402173
L 4790
L 4791
L 5365
9TU1683
L 5366
RW 6403375
L 5364
L 4942
L 5354
L 5357
9TU1683 13TU1674
L 5355
L 5361
L 5356
L 5363
L 5362
QUAR
6404164
OLU 0349581
L 5362
PMD
N
W
E
S
770000
Scale 1:30000
772000 200 0 200 400 Meters
774000
Water
Roads
Rail
Bear Glacier Park Boundary
Cadastral Data/Tenures
EMPR Mines and Showings
Protected Areas
Skeena District

- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC)) has an interest in the species at risk in this park.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Recreational users: picnickers, Highway 37 travellers, campers at Meziadin Lake Provincial Park and along Hwy 37 are interested in the park because of its scenic and day use outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Local government and residents: Meziadin Junction, Stewart and Hyder, Alaska are interested in the park because of its contribution to the tourism opportunities in the region.
- Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine is interested in the park because of its contribution to the tourism opportunities in the region.
- Northern BC Tourism Association Stikine is interested in the park because of its contribution to the tourism opportunities in the region.
- Film makers are interested in the park because of its outstanding scenery and easy accessibility from Highway 37A.

Role of Bear Glacier Provincial Park

The primary role of Bear Glacier Provincial Park is to provide Highway 37 travellers with an opportunity to view Bear Glacier. The park presents outdoor recreation opportunities by a maintained rest/picnic area. Also, Bear Glacier Provincial Park offers a panorama of scenic and nature appreciation interest for Meziadin Lake Provincial Park campers and the residents of Meziadin Junction, Stewart and Hyder, Alaska.

The park plays an important secondary role of protecting a small portion of Bear Glacier and Strohn Lake at the toe of the glacier. The park protects the entire glacial lake ecosystem and its processes. The area provides habitat for many species of flora and fauna.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction from Previous Planning

The designation and the park boundaries are required to be continued according to the terms of the Nisga'a Final Agreement. The Nisga'a Final Agreement is a treaty and a land claims agreement within the meaning of sections 25 and 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Consequently the designation of Bear Glacier Provincial Park may not be modified without an amendment to the treaty itself.

Management Issues

Theme	Issue
Protecting ecological values	• The park's natural features may be at risk because the inventory of such features is incomplete. • Damage to Strohn Lake's ecology may be occurring because of soil erosion caused by Hwy 37A pullout roadside banks sliding into the lake. • The park's ecological values may be at risk because the park's boundary remains unidentified on the land. • The park's ecology may be at risk because the Ministry of Transportation's contractor dumps avalanche snow into Strohn Lake.

Theme	Issue
Protecting recreational values	• Monitoring of recreation use and park visitor activities restricted because of limited park presence. • Bear Glacier's scenic vista is difficult to see from the rest area because vegetation obscures the view. • A variety of sight seeing and glacier trips have been offered through commercial guides without evidence of appropriate permits.
Protecting cultural features	• Cultural features may be at risk because the Environmental Stewardship Division has no inventory of these features.
First Nation Involvement	• First Nations interests may be at risk because a formal agreement on consultation about the planning and management of the park remains undefined.
Public Safety	• The public may be at risk because the pull-out off of Hwy 37A is susceptible to rockslides from the hillside on the north side of the highway. • The traveling public may be at risk during winter because of the high potential for avalanche along Highway 37A.
Public Information	• An Environmental Stewardship Division information and interpretation opportunity is not realized because little information is provided to the public at the various rest areas within the park about Bear Glacier or glaciers in general. • Environmental Stewardship Division cannot provide the public with information about the about the glacier's rate of retreat and associated environmental issues because the division lacks supporting scientific data.

Management Direction

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

Objective	Strategy
To protect the park's ecological values	• Complete an inventory of flora and fauna with priority given to identifying rare vascular plants. • Work with Ministry of Transportation to ensure the banks on north side of Highway 37A along Strohn Lake are stable. • Minimize visitor impacts on lake ecology and drainage. • Implement a land survey of Bear Glacier Provincial Park's boundary and place park boundary markers as required. • Investigate the potential for scientific research into the Bear Glacier's rate of retreat, the geomorphologic processes underway and the vegetation succession following glaciation. • Evaluate the effect on Strohn Lake's ecology that is occurring because Ministry of Transportation's maintenance contractors continue to dump avalanche and highway snow into the lake.
To enhance and protect the park's outdoor recreation opportunities and features	• Examine an enhanced park ranger program for Meziadin Lake Provincial Park that will allow an increased park presence for Bear Glacier Provincial Park. • Consider brushing program for rest stop area to maintain views of glacier.
To protect the park's cultural heritage values	• Investigate and collate existing information about the park's cultural heritage values. • Work with the Nisga'a Nation and Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs to identify cultural heritage sites and traditional use in the area. • Prepare a cultural heritage management plan if the cultural heritage values inventory indicates such a plan is warranted.

Objective	Strategy
To enhance commercial business opportunities associated with Bear Glacier Provincial Park	• Identify commercial outdoor recreation businesses using Bear Glacier Provincial Park without authorization. ➢ Place these operations under a Park Use Permit provided that impacts do not unduly present hazards to the park's natural and cultural values and required insurance and documentation is provided. ➢ Particular emphasis should be placed on permitting recreational trips associated with explaining the geomorphologic processes and issues surrounding glaciation and climate change. • Work with the Village of Stewart and Tourism BC to assist compatible film industry interest in filming in the park
To ensure the park is safe for public use	• Work with Ministry of Transportation to stabilize banks along the lakeside highway pullout and Highway 37A. • Conduct a public safety risk assessment of the park. • Cooperate with the Ministry of Transportation's Avalanche Section to ensure winter visitor safety.
To involve First Nations in the management of the Bear Glacier Provincial Park.	• Confirm with the Nisga'a Nation the requirements set out under the Nisga'a Final Agreement. ➢ In accordance with paragraph 68, the Environmental Stewardship Division will require notification that consultation communications for Bear Glacier Provincial Park and other parks in the Nass Area should be through the Joint Park Management Committee for Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park and Gingietl Creek Ecological Reserve. • Implement the provincial and ministry consultation guidelines with the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs. ➢ Environmental Stewardship Division will confirm these guidelines with the Hereditary Chiefs.
To provide the public with accurate information about the park and the public's responsibilities in conserving the park's features.	• Develop an interpretive panel providing information on issues relating to glaciation and modern day glacier retreat and advances; and relevant information surrounding climate change should be prepared. ➢ Contact Parks Canada to gain a perspective on the Athabasca Glacier interpretative program in Jasper National Park.

Consultation and Future Planning

The Environmental Stewardship Division will review this MDS in about 5 years, or as required, to account for increased knowledge on visitor use, environmental impacts and changes in adjacent land use. Meanwhile, the Environmental Stewardship Division will consult with the Nisga'a Nation and the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs to determine heritage and cultural values. The Environmental Stewardship Division will consult with relevant government agencies to ensure that adjacent development does not affect park values. The Environmental Stewardship Division will consult with the Ministry of Transportation to discuss management and safety issues related to the adjacent highway and gravel pit.

Zoning Plan

Two management planning zones apply to Bear Glacier Provincial Park.

Intensive Recreation Zone

Objective: To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

Zone Description: covers 33 hectares of the park and comprises the automobile pullout area along Hwy 37A and the picnic rest area.

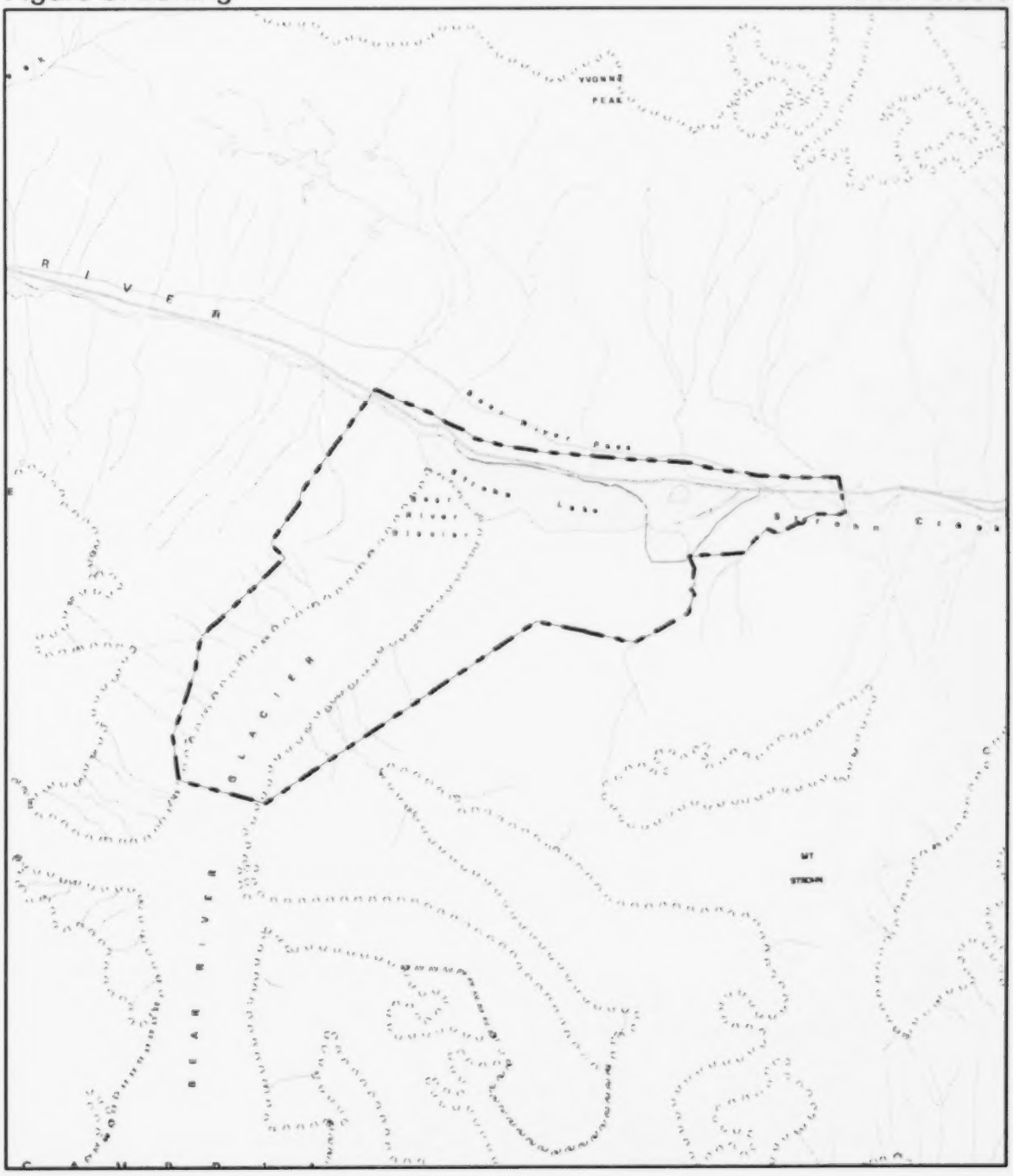
Natural Environment Zone

Objective: To protect scenic values and to provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

Zone Description: Applies to the remaining 509 hectares of the park.

Figure 3: Zoning

Bear Glacier



Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83

Intensive Recreation
Natural Environment
Protected Area Boundary

0 1
km

Produced in Jan 2003 for Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

This is a visual representation only and should not be used for legal purposes.

Appendix 1. Bear Glacier Provincial Park.

Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	N/A
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N
Ski Hills	N
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	Y
Commercial Filmmaking	Y
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N
Road Access	N
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorised)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised Water Access	N
Aircraft Access	Y
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	M
Fire Management (prevention)	M
Forest Insect/Disease Control	N1
Noxious Weed Control	N1
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	N1
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan
M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives
N= not allowed
N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only
N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed